

[Library Lending Now Includes Kilowatt Monitors](#)

January 6, 2009 ■■■ Reported By: Keith Shortall

There was a time when libraries lent out...well...books. But then came videos and later DVDs. Today library lending has expanded to include something else--Kilowatt monitors, small devices that are designed to show consumers how much electricity it takes to run each of their household appliances. State utility regulators are hoping the new monitors will prompt Mainers to stop and think about how much that computer, coffee maker, or wide-screen TV is actually costing you to operate every month.

Set up on a folding table at the Scarborough Public Library are two typical household appliances--a small coffeemaker and a table-top fan heater. Dick Bacon of Efficiency Maine demonstrates how, using a device called a kilowatt monitor, you can actually calculate how much energy each appliance consumes. The coffee maker, according to the meter, is using about 621 watts, but Bacon says that's not the most important number. "This process tells you right now the watts consumed, but it doesn't tell you the kilowatt hours. The purple button over here will actually give you the calculated kilowatt hours, and that's what you buy through your meter."

The purple button reveals that the coffee maker is consuming about .6 kilowatt hours. A kilowatt hour in Maine right now costs about 17 cents. "It would be point six times seventeen cents. Quickly in your head you're going to say it's about nine cents. So if this ran steady for one hour at that wattage, it would be about nine cents," Bacon says.

Now over to the table-top heating fan, which at the second heat setting is using about fourteen hundred watts. If the unit runs for an hour, Bacon says it will consume about one and a half kilowatt hours. "Seventeen, twenty five...about twenty five cents per hour if it runs three or four hours a night. That's basically a buck a night, 30 days in a billing cycle, now your up to \$30 per month for the unit."

The so-called "Kill a Watt" campaign, says Public Utilities Commission Chair Sharon Reishus, is designed to give Maine consumers a fun, but instructive way to gauge how much their appliances actually cost them, even when they're not being used.

"And it's really shocking when you discover, for example, that a phone charger is using 90 percent of the power that it otherwise is using when it's actually charging the phone. But even if you just leave it plugged in without the phone attached to it, it's drawing power, and the same with the fancy TV's, or really anything with a remote control. I think it would be interesting to most people to discover just how much these devices are drawing when they think they've turned them off."

Keith Shortall: "And this could put a damper on the post-Christmas excitement over some of those electronic games that now may be monitored more closely by Mom and Dad."

Reishus: "Well, Mom and Dad, I think, are the ones that need to be concerned about this because these appliances are a significant part of everyone's household electric use. And just as we've encouraged people to switch to compact florescent lights, and I've gotten lots of stories back from people who are shocked because they actually see the difference in their electricity bill, that they take this next step and check out one of these electricity monitors and just check and see what some of these devices are drawing. I think they'll be surprised and maybe alter their habits just a little--enough to save some money."

[Efficiency Maine](#) has placed 600 monitors in libraries throughout the state, and is launching a statewide public awareness campaign. The kits are expected to be available for checkout at most public libraries by next Monday.

Kill-A-Watt - Monitor Your Power Usage
Item #23320

Manufacturer Info:
P3 International P4400 Kill-A-Watts

Regular:

\$39.99

Sale Price:

\$23.99 - You Save: **40%** (\$16.00)!

Availability:

Usually ships the same business day.

Average User Rating:

Product Description

Watts killing you? Electricity bills can be murder. But now you can cut down on costs and find out if your old power supply is worth keeping or if it's time for an upgrade. Simply connect your computer to the Kill-A-Watt from P3 International, and it will assess how efficient your power supply is.

Kill-A-Watt's large LCD display will count consumption by the Kilowatt-hour, same as your local utility. You can figure out your computer's electrical expenses by the day, week, month, or year. Check the quality of your power by monitoring Voltage, Line Frequency, and Power Factor.

The Kill-A-Watt is also great for home appliances. Now you'll know if it is time for a new refrigerator or if that old air conditioner is saving you money. Don't be another casualty. With the amazing Kill-A-Watt you'll have wasteful devices pushing up the daises.

Features:

- LCD Display
- Cumulative Kilowatt-Hour Monitor
- Forecast Your Costs
- Also displays Volts, Amps, Watts, Hz, VA
- 0.2% Accuracy

Specifications:

- Model: P4400
- Operating Voltage: 115 VAC
- Max Voltage: 125VAC
- Max Current: 15A
- Max Power: 1875VA
- Weight: 5oz
- Dimensions: 5 1/8" x 1 5/8" x 2 3/8"